



Staff Photo by Masaaki Okada

Manager Ed Hazlewood (right), Program Chief Hunter Hughes in New Quarters

Innovative WVCW Expanding

By C. A. Bustard

For sheer variety, the city's foremost broadcasting operation is probably WVCW, the student-operated radio station at Virginia Commonwealth University.

To a format that already includes top 40, album-oriented rock, jazz, oldies and disco music, as well as news and public service

features, the station plans to add classical music and religious rock programs in the near future.

There is even a soap opera in the pilot stage. Tentative title: "Shafer Street, Shafer Street."

The new touches in the station's lineup are the most audible of several changes in store. Within the next two weeks, WVCW will ascend from the cramped basement quarters it has occupied for 10 years, taking charge of a suite of rooms on the top floor of 916 W. Franklin St., VCU's media building.

Transmitted by carrier current over telephone lines, WVCW is heard in most of VCU's dormitories and in a limited number of Fan District homes located near dorms.

It is staffed with student volunteers — anywhere from 15 to 60 during a school year, said station manager Ed Hazlewood — and is supported by student activities fees and commercials. Its budget this year is about \$4,000, Hazlewood said.

IN A RECENT BILLBOARD Magazine article, WVCW was named one of the four most innovative college radio stations in the country. Its program director, Hunter Hughes, was cited for the station's varied format and its work reporting musical trends.

"Everything we do, we like to call 'progressive'," said Hughes. "We try to cover all the bases" of listeners' tastes.

The variety of programming — WVCW has what is called a "block format," where the broadcast week is divided into parts devoted to different styles of music — is typical of college stations whose audiences are limited by transmission patterns, yet still contain a diversity of tastes.

Hazlewood noted that WVCW has both a disadvantage and an asset in its dormitory-bound audience. Fewer in number than other stations' listeners, the VCU station's audience is more concentrated geographically, socially and financially.

So, while it has fewer potential advertisers than the competition, WVCW's clients are more likely to depend on the student and neighborhood trade, Hazlewood said.

The station's news operation, headed by Ellen Kraft, includes

VCU's WVCW Is Expanding

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20 minutes of CBS Radio Network news programs per day, a weekly half-hour public affairs program and several newscasts per day.

THE NEWSSTAFF is backed up by students in the university's mass communications department, who use the station for on-the-job training, she said.

Besides broadcasting to students in dormitories, WVCW serves the school by staging "remotes" in conjunction with university functions. It provides music for dances and occasionally originates programs from public areas of the school, like the Shafer Street Court.

Once settled in its new quarters, Hazlewood said, WVCW hopes to continue expanding. The plan is to extend its signal to dorms on the downtown Medical College of Virginia campus and to several of VCU's cafeterias within the next several years.

At the same time, he said, the station hopes to conduct an "FM search," to examine the possibility of obtaining an FM frequency and a transmitter to send WVCW's programs into homes throughout central Virginia.

College stations like WVCW "are a good place to build a résumé for the budding broadcaster," as well as providing a service to the university," Hazlewood said.

About 200 former staff members are working at radio and television stations in Virginia and elsewhere, he said, while others work in related fields.

"If anything," college radio experience "bolsters confidence in any field you go into," said Hughes. "If I were going into business, I would feel more confident" after serving in the WVCW management.

"There's the experience of different departments of the station interacting with each other. You learn something about engineering, budgeting procedures . . .

"There are many things that radio stands for," Hughes has learned, "besides the disk jockey on the air."